

APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

FY2012 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition

Legal Applicant Name: City Year, Inc.	Application ID: 12AC133396
Program Name: City Year Columbus	

For the purpose of enhancing our programs by improving the quality and quantity of applications to the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), we are providing specific feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of this application. This feedback is provided on a restricted basis and cannot be shared or distributed outside of your organization. We hope you will find this information helpful in completing applications to our future grant competitions. These comments are not meant to represent a comprehensive assessment; rather the analysis represents those elements that had the greatest bearing on the rating of your application. Please note that this feedback consists of summary comments from more than one reviewer. For this reason, some of the comments may seem to be inconsistent or contradictory.

Reviewers' Summary Comments:

- The applicant outlines a feasible and effective member supervision plan as evidenced by the day-to-day supervision of AmeriCorps Members by CYC Program Managers with each Program Manager assigned to 12 Members and conducting daily team check-ins, holding weekly team meetings, and conducting one-on-ones with each Member of their team at least monthly (once every two weeks for Team Leaders) to track progress toward goals and service quality and address emerging school, service or personal issues. An invaluable component is that each Program Manager spends at least 60% of his/her time in the school where the Members will be Monday-Thursdays.
- The applicant has demonstrated valuing a strong member retention rate as evidenced by its commitment to make changes to improve a 92% retention rate in 2010-11 and a combined rate across two grants of 90%. Efforts to improve retention include increasing member living allowances by 33% to meet the AmeriCorps minimum (from \$9,108 to \$12,100).
- This application provides current research concerning Early Warning Indicators that predict school failure due to issues with attendance, behavior and below grade expectations for academic achievement. The use of near peers to provide services will provide positive models for students. The extensive training and support provided to the Members will benefit not only the Members, but the teachers in the classes supported by the Members and the students served by the Members both during the school day and after school.
- The strengths of this applicant's Program Design are evident in presenting antecedents to school failure and addressing those concerns individually and in small groups throughout the school day.
- The use of well-trained AmeriCorps members who can relate to the students daily while incorporating external stakeholders was provided. The applicant has a well-developed member training and support plan with clear objectives, encouraging collaboration.

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- Supervision is provided day-to-day through daily check-ins, weekly team meetings, one-on ones with Members at least monthly and once every 2 weeks for Team leaders which effectively tracks progress toward goals and service quality and addresses emerging school, service or personal issues. Supervisors are either City Year alumni or have equivalent experience in the national service or education field. They receive training at the City Year's annual Summer Academy, which provides new and returning staff training on Corps management, leadership development, and service-based skills. The Program/Service Director who meets with Program Managers once a week provides oversight. The Director also conducts weekly in school and after school observations to check effective practice, give feedback and gauge team dynamics and determine additional training needs. This is extensive and should provide effective supervision for AmeriCorps members.
- The target community is described by the following: 52,000 students served annually with a 4 year graduate rate of 72% in 2011; 77% of students are economically disadvantaged and more than 73% are minority, predominantly African American; average student performance - 49% proficient in math and 60% proficient in ELA; in targeted schools the four year graduation rate between 54% and 69%. These compelling statistics in the schools to be served would justify the intervention.
- Member activities are described as programs run during breakfast and morning greeting to welcome students into school, provide homework assistance, facilitate after-school student interest and service-learning clubs, facilitate report card conferencing and conduct phone calls home if a student is absent. Members also run whole school programming such as anti-bullying rallies, provide in-class behavior coaching and conduct mentoring focused on behavior and attitude issues. Coursework activities are provided by small-group targeted tutoring in english and math, and provide homework assistance. Members work on these activities as a team and also meet with teachers and other school staff at least every other week. Using teams and school staff especially will assist Members in providing their activities effectively.
- AmeriCorps members are all between the ages of 17 and 24 allowing them to serve as full time near peers who are able to bridge a generational and authority gap among students, teachers and families. They are also diverse and reflective of the local population. This further shows that AmeriCorps members are uniquely qualified to work with this population.
- Tutoring programs are described with the member eligibility including at least a high school diploma and completing baseline tutor trainings. This is contracted out to Public Consulting Group to supplement the Site Literacy Capacity Program starting in this year. This framework includes multiple training opportunities, accessible training materials/tools and site-based support. In addition, the curriculums used and supervision model are described. This is extensive and well thought out for the tutoring component of this intervention.
- One on one work with students is a powerful way to link AmeriCorps members with this population and increase their desire to make the program work. As role models, AmeriCorps members can exert much influence on the younger population, particularly when they come from the local area and "look like them". If AmeriCorps members feel strongly about their work, they will undoubtedly affect the performance of the students with whom they interact.

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- CYC's intervention strategy is based in well-established, well-validated, evidence-based City Year curricula and held to vetted, quantifiable City Year performance standards, which have recently been recalibrated to conform to new AmeriCorps performance measure standards. Each aspect of the proposed intervention is directly responsive to the defined need, as identified using EWIs.
- CYC's program design is implemented in close collaboration with all relevant community stakeholders (especially teachers and school staff, but also with parents and community volunteers drawn from various sources), involves AmeriCorps members drawn from local communities, and uses evidence-based methodologies with proven effectiveness.
- CYC intentionally recruits its Members from their target communities, offers well-structured, ongoing training for all Members, using established City Year curricula, provides structured reflection opportunities throughout the experience, and offers transitional support for AmeriCorps members who are completing their term of service, to assist them in maximizing the positive personal impact of their experience.